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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AIRGRAM

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1965 JUN 25 AM 7 15

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO : BAIDA, BENGHAZI, USCINCEUR

ANALYSIS & DISTRIBUTION BRANCH

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FROM : Amembassy TRIPOLI

DATE: JUNE 23, 1965

SUBJECT : Comments on PUBLIC SAFETY REVIEW FOR LIBYA

REF : Department's CA-12688

G/PM

As a general premise, it is true that the police forces in Libya, taken collectively, may rightly be regarded as a "first line of defense" against subversion and insurgency. At the same time, however, it is not entirely clear to what extent pro-UAR elements may have infiltrated the Libyan police force. Any such infiltration could lessen considerably its capability against UAR-inspired subversion and insurgency. There follow answers to the several questions posed in the referenced message:

1. Along with the Libyan Army, the Libyan National Security Forces (LNSF) are at present the most effective element in Libya capable of countering a threat to the internal security of the country. The LNSF in fact consists of six components:

a. Directorate for Eastern Region (Cyrenaican Defense Force - CYDEF);

b. Directorate for Western Region (Tripolitanian Police);

c. Directorate for Southern Region (Fezzan Police);

d. Directorate for Immigration, Passport and Alien Control;

e. Directorate for International Criminal Records and Statistics;

f. Directorate for State Security and Intelligence.

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Of these, only the Eastern, Western and Southern Region forces have a para-military capability. The Eastern forces number slightly over 5,000 men; the Western forces about 7,000, and the Southern forces about 1,500.

Taken as a whole, the effectiveness of the LNSF is fairly high by Middle Eastern standards, and is good even by Western standards. There are nevertheless significant areas of naivete in their grasp of the more subtle forms of subversion, and it is questionable whether they have any significant understanding of the modus operandi of the Communist movement.

Apart from the foregoing, the LNSF suffers from a high degree of fragmentation, as already outlined in a preceding paragraph. Initially organized as separate units, the several component elements of the LNSF were briefly joined following the setting aside of the federal system in Libya in 1962, but were again divided into separate entities in 1964. Thus, while the mission of each component element is the maintenance of internal security, this mission tends to be defined in regional rather than national terms. This sectionalism is strengthened by regional recruitment policies. There is little coordination between and among the several component elements. The one likely unifying element is probably a high incidence of loyalty to the King and also an attachment to the monarchy as an institution. The latter proposition is, of course, difficult to evaluate in detail. One school of thought holds that the Eastern, Western and Southern forces will continue to support the monarchy even after the death of King Idris. Another suggests that the Western force, i.e., the Tripolitanian Police, is somewhat more ambivalent. It might or might not continue to support the monarchy, depending entirely on Tripolitanian judgment of the degree of influence Tripolitanians might have on a would-be successor. This latter school also believes the Western force may conceivably join with some other Libyan power center, i.e., the Libyan Army, in support of some other governmental structure.

Morale within the LNSF is high, thanks to the excellent salary, retirement, and related benefits program which the Libyan Government has established.

2. Apart from a still inadequate transport and communications

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capability, the LNSF has no major outstanding need or deficiency which would impede it from performing its internal security mission. The major problem is that of coordination: i.e., the need for far greater cohesion among the several components making up the LNSF. Sectional differences remain strong in Libya, and there is little reason to believe that greater cohesion will develop in the foreseeable future. Instead, it should probably be assumed that a considerable degree of sectional fragmentation will persist and reduce the Libyan Government's capability to concentrate LNSF operations. This situation could very easily be exploited by subversive interests intent on destroying Libyan national unity.

3. In theory, the Libyan Government is aware of some of the deficiencies within the LNSF organizational structure. It is unlikely, however, that any corrective action will soon be taken. A deliberately contrived balance of sorts exists between and among the regional components. This permits the various components to function without too great a preoccupation with what a rival element in an adjacent area may be doing. Any attempt to improve cohesion by appointing a central commander other than the King could upset the balance which presently exists. It is doubtful, moreover, that the King would want such a central authority, since he would have to concede the possibility of the emergence of a powerful armed institution within the government capable of causing change through force. The King has long ruled by a subtle system of checks and balances of which the several LNSF components are parts.

4. The US Assistance Program to the LNSF was formally terminated in October 1963, at the request of the Libyan Government. Libyans are now fully capable of financing their own requirements, once they come to recognize them, and do not require any further grant Public Safety Assistance under AID. So far as is known, no assistance in this respect is being provided by other free world countries, and none is coming from the Bloc. Liaison exists between various component elements of the LNSF and counterparts of the US, UK and West German governments. In addition, as a member of Interpol, Libya has access to the resources of that organization, although to date her involvement therein can at best be described as minimal.

5. The Libyan Government has shown no particular interest in any renewal of an AID Public Safety Assistance Program. On the other hand, there is some interest in technical assistance in the form of

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equipment, training or advice which various free world police institutions can provide. The Libyan Government will probably try to avoid government-to-government channels and rely instead on making direct contact with manufacturers of police equipment, individuals who may be hired under contract as police advisers, or organizations which can provide training in the police field. Certainly we should encourage communication between the Libyan Government and ourselves on these matters, and we should be prepared at all times to offer advice on where the things the Libyan Government wants for its LNSF might best be obtained. At the same time, the subject is one of considerable delicacy, and attempting to push the Libyan Government into a program of police help is certain to be counterproductive. Even the US offer made pursuant to Deptel 609, following the recent oil sabotage, was tepidly received by the Prime Minister (Baida's 227), and no further interest has been shown. The Libyan Government has, however, taken steps to purchase from the UK certain transport and armored car equipment for the LNSF (London's 781, rptd Tripoli 634).

6. A grant US Public Safety Assistance Program to the LNSF scarcely seems justified. The latter are capable of satisfying their own needs independently of any channels we might represent. Funds are available to the Libyan Government, virtually in unlimited amounts, for use in strengthening the LNSF — provided always that the Libyan Government has a genuine desire to do so. We are obviously interested in preserving the generally pro-Western orientation of the security forces, but believe that this should be done through the several liaison channels to the LNSF which already exist. These include CAS and OSI. They are still tenuous, but are gradually being strengthened. Although we should continue to indicate to the Libyan Government our readiness to be of help, we will be well-advised not to push our interest in helping beyond what the Libyan traffic will bear.

7. No compelling need presently exists for a revival of a Public Safety Assistance Program in Libya to counter a possible Communist threat. A UAR subversive threat ought to be reckoned as a more serious possibility, but even here the Libyans are likely to be chary of asking for outside help. Notwithstanding, we are becoming increasingly aware of the requirements of the LNSF and its position within the Libyan Government, both as a

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critical factor for internal stability and as a target for external subversive interests. We have begun a more intensive evaluation of the role of the LNSF vis-a-vis that of the Libyan Army. These two organizations clearly have great potential political significance.

At present there appears to be little coordination between the LNSF and the Libyan Army. As the Libyan Army becomes stronger through US and third country assistance, a rivalry could conceivably develop between these two organizations which could act to the detriment of our interest in encouraging political stability in Libya. In acquiring perspective on the defense capabilities of the Libyan Government against whatever threat, subversive or otherwise, the need for evaluation of the inter-relationships or lack thereof between the LNSF and the Libyan military clearly looms large. Both of these organizations are likely to have a profound effect on Libya's future at such time when the moment of truth arrives on the occasion of the King's demise. If they work together, stability may be maintained; if they pull separately, civil war could ensue.

At the moment at least, the Eastern and Western Region forces of the LNSF are anxious to strengthen their capability. For the Libyan Government, the recent sabotage of oil installations was traumatic. The LNSF is currently working closely with recently assigned security experts from Esso and Mobil to assist it in developing a more effective security program. It is possible, therefore, that in a month or two, after these experts have had the opportunity to survey the situation, new opportunities may arise to consider how we might best help the Libyan Government in strengthening its national security forces. But we would reiterate that the subject is a delicate one and the Libyan Government shows no sign of willingness to ask our help.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR:

Hermann Frederick Eilts
Counselor of Embassy

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